

Updating our future

As time marches forward, a community occasionally needs to examine its guide book to determine which direction it is heading.

In 2002, Lincoln and Lancaster County adopted a Comprehensive Plan which formed the community's common vision to guide development into 2025. This document includes the desired pattern of land uses and public facilities necessary to support growth. Within this living document is the Long Range Transportation Plan, which describes an evolving local transportation system built upon the Comprehensive Plan's vision.

Federal regulations require that the LRTP be updated every five years to qualify projects for federal funding. To fulfill this requirement, an updated LRTP needs to be adopted in 2007 to extend the plan's vision to 2030. The LRTP impacts roads, public transit, motorized transport, bicycles and walking.

"We're looking five years further down the road," said Roger Figard, city engineer. "That includes five years of additional population, land uses and service areas. We're predicting what the impact will be on the traffic system."

This is not a revision of the Comprehensive Plan and the LRTP, but rather an update of the existing plans.

The MPO received public input at a series of open houses in December and looks for additional input as the process moves forward.

"We anticipate strong involvement of the public," said Marvin Krout, plan-



ning director. "We have a tradition of people being involved and I don't expect this to be any different."

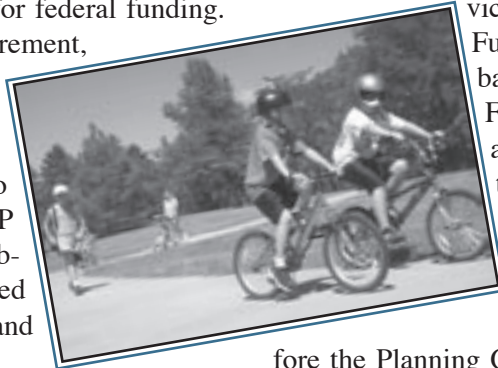
Krout said that, as Lincoln grows, it is important to protect our high quality of life. With good planning, we can also increase efficiency and control costs.

An updated Future Service Limit, the area anticipated to receive city services by 2030, and Future Land Use, based on the updated Future Service Limit and growth projections, have been established after receiving public input at an open house and hearings be-

fore the Planning Commission. Public input led to the drafting of three Future Service Scenarios in 2005, which were combined into a single working scenario which will continue to develop with public input and further examination.

Currently, Public Works/Utilities is working with a computer model to help develop the transportation network that will support the Future Land Use scenario. Krout said this model will help determine what level of service the city can expect to receive from the traffic system of the future as well as the areas that can receive city services.

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What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A Comprehensive Plan is a community's common vision of how it wants to evolve. These plans typically look 20 to 25 years into the future and generally deal with the physical characteristics of a city or county. They contain the dreams and plans a community needs to guide future development. These plans illustrate where tomorrow's homes, schools, parks, shopping areas, employment centers and other uses will be located. They often show natural and environmentally sensitive areas a community may want to preserve or enhance for its children and grandchildren.

What is a Long Range Transportation Plan?

A Long Range Transportation Plan fulfills the requirements of the federal transportation planning process by describing the transportation needs of a community for at least a 20-year period. The plan considers a full range of transportation modes, including urban and rural roads, pedestrians, bicycles, trails, transit, parking, railroads and airports. In Lincoln and Lancaster County, the transportation plan serves as the Mobility and Transportation section of the Comprehensive Plan. The plan presents transportation improvements that will be needed today and in the future to help move people and goods about the community.

Input sought as plans are updated

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According to Figard, this electronic model serves as a useful tool to help predict how traffic will move throughout the city as it continues to grow. The Long Range Transportation Plan is updated largely based on the model's findings.

Jon Carlson, planning commission chairman, said he hopes Lincoln's future traffic system can maintain the level of service it provides today.

"While Lincoln enjoys very low average travel times nationally, we want to make improvements where we can," Carlson said. "For me, what's important is that people have consistent travel times. They know how long it takes to get to work, to school, etc."

Figard said Lincoln has worked hard to make incremental improvements over time to reduce congestion and maintain

traffic flow rather than wait for larger issues to arise. He said the city needs to approach the future responsibly to ensure congestion is maintained at a reasonable level as population grows.

The process to update the Comprehensive Plan and LRTP is guided by the Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Commission with involvement from the Metropolitan Planning Organization's Technical Committee, comprised of staff from the city, county and state.

After land use and transportation issues are addressed, the draft LRTP will be forwarded to the Planning Commission for a public hearing. Once amended and approved by the Planning Commission, the City Council, County Board and the Officials Committee of the MPO will each review and take action on the plan.

3 Comp Plan/LRTP 2030 Update Questions: Jon Carlson

1. What is the importance of the Comprehensive Plan?

"The Comprehensive Plan is our community vision for what we want Lincoln/Lancaster County to be in the future. Lincoln is the great city it is today because we've made plans and worked hard to make these plans a reality. If you looked to the Comprehensive Plans of the '70s and '80s, you'd be surprised by how accurate they are. A plan has to allow for some flexibility for other opportunities, but you can't move forward if you don't know where you want to go."

2. How does the price of growth affect the continued development of the Comprehensive Plan?

"Cost is crucial. I ask for budget estimates every step of the way be-



Jon Carlson chairs the Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Commission, which guides the Comprehensive Plan updating process.

cause, while it's the City Council and County Board who ultimately adopts a budget, it's irresponsible for us to adopt a plan that we cannot afford."

3. What do you get out of serving on the Planning Commission?

"It's a privilege to have the responsibility of trying to maintain the high quality of life we have here in Lincoln. Being born and raised here, I've certainly enjoyed the benefits, so it's a pleasure to have the opportunity to give back."

Citizens shape plan at Open Houses

The Lincoln-Lancaster County Metropolitan Planning Organization received public input on the Long Range Transportation Plan update at seven Open Houses in December. Attendees discussed the needs and desires of the local transportation system.

At each Open House, information was presented on each section of the existing LRTP, with a station set up for each section of the plan. Comments were requested regarding near- and long-term transportation ideas, with discussion focused on a range of transportation modes.

Jon Carlson, Planning Commission chairman, said the Open Houses presented a great opportunity for the public to present their ideas. "We work very hard to make good decisions for the community," he said. "An important part of that process is getting

citizen feedback."

Input from these meetings helped shape the proposed LRTP update, with more public participation expected during Open Houses in May and August.

Photos: Citizens tour stations set up for each section of the Long Range Transportation Plan.



StarTran examines path to the future

As a city evolves, so does its public transit needs.

In 1883, Lincolniters welcomed the city's first public transit system – a horse-car line operated by Lincoln Street Railway. Thanks to technological advances, Lincoln Traction Company began operating a single bus route from downtown to University Place in 1926. In 1971, public transit operations were acquired by the city, using 33 full-sized buses. This service later became StarTran, which today features 56 full-sized buses and nine Handy-Vans operating on 21 fixed routes. A new study will examine the future of public transport for our growing city.

The StarTran Advisory Board and staff, Public Works/Utilities and the

Planning Department are in the process of selecting a consultant to perform a comprehensive operations analysis of StarTran. This process is the result of recommendations made by

previous studies and is expected to generate a Transit Development Plan to be amended into the Comprehensive Plan. This study is planned to begin in March.

It will examine funding and organizational operations of StarTran to determine service standards and policies for today and the future. The study will also examine busing needs in various areas of the city.

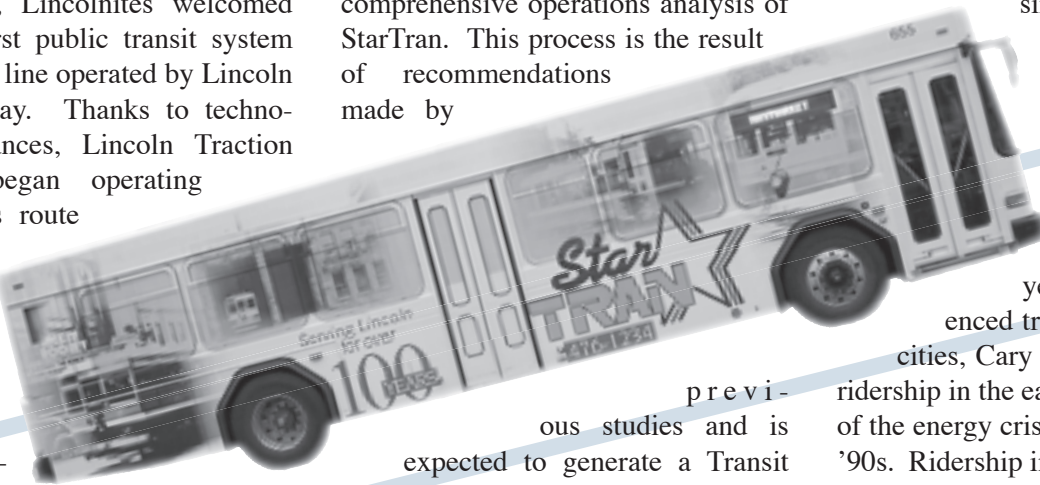
According to David Cary, trans-

portation planner, the study will compare StarTran to the public transit of similar-sized cities, focusing on locations with major transportation demands, such as a major university and state capital.

During the years, StarTran experienced trends similar to other cities, Cary said, with a spike in ridership in the early '80s on the heels of the energy crisis, then a drop in the '90s. Ridership increased slightly and stabilized since that time.

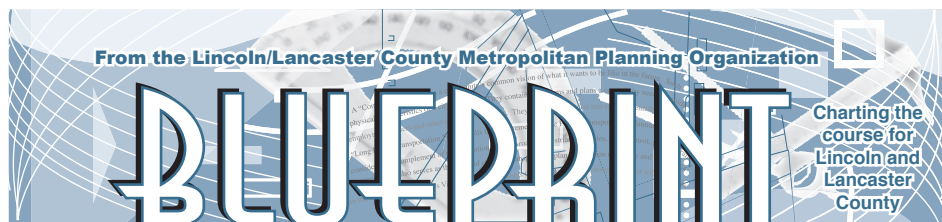
"StarTran provides a service to a population in need of that service," Cary said. "The study will provide suggestions how to improve service and increase efficiency into the future."

The Advisory Board will act as the public input project committee for the study.



Get involved by:

- E-mailing your ideas and comments to:
plan@lincoln.ne.gov
- Visiting the Web site. www.ci.lincoln.ne.us/city/plan/
- Faxing ideas to 441-6377
- Getting on the mailing list by calling 441-7491
- Attend future Comp Plan/LRTP 2030 Update public meetings
- Contacting the Public Works/Utilities Department at 441-7548, or the Planning Department at 441-7491



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Comp Plan/LRTP Update - Dates to remember

City-County Planning Commission Public Listening Forum

Your opportunity to publicly present ideas to the commission!

Wednesday, May 17

County-City Building, 555 South 10th St.

Anticipated start time: 1:00 p.m. (subject to change)

Planning Commission Working Sessions

The Planning Commission will hold a Working Session in early March to narrow the street network down to three alternatives. These sessions are scheduled for the afternoon of **March 8 and March 9** (if necessary) beginning at 1 p.m. in Room 113 of the County-City Building. Sessions will conclude once the Commission has selected three network alternatives for further study.

Other meetings and events

There will be other meetings and events held throughout the next several months. These include meetings of the City-County Common, MPO Technical Committee, as well as public open houses. Check the process Web site at www.ci.lincoln.ne.us, keyword "cpupdate" or call the Public Works/Utilities Department at 441-7548 or the City-County Planning Department at 441-7491.

Please note that all dates and times are subject to change. If you require special assistance at any of these events, please contact the Planning Department at 441-7491 at least 24 hours in advance.